

The President's Radio Address *December 16, 2000*

Good morning. This week, as I work to conclude the last budget negotiations of my Presidency, I'm reminded how far we've come these past 8 years. We now live in a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity. But we didn't get there by accident. We made tough choices based on core values of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans.

Today I want to talk about two elements critical to our continued success: first, our progress in moving people from welfare to work; and second, our continuing commitment to fiscal discipline and a budget that puts our people first.

Vice President Gore and I took office in 1993 with a pledge to end welfare as we know it. Thanks to comprehensive welfare reform, a renewed sense of responsibility, and the strongest economy in a generation, millions of former welfare recipients now know the dignity of work.

Today I am pleased to announce that over the past 8 years we've cut welfare caseloads by more than 8 million people. Last year alone 1.2 million parents on welfare went to work, determined to build better lives. Nationwide over the last 8 years, welfare rolls have dropped nearly 60 percent and now are the lowest in more than 30 years.

We've been able to sustain this progress year after year because Government, the private sector, and welfare recipients themselves all have done their parts. Together, we are finally breaking the cycle of dependence that has long crippled the hopes of too many families.

When we enacted landmark welfare reform in 1996, I insisted that Congress provide incentives to reward States for helping people to find jobs and to keep jobs. Today I'm pleased to announce that 28 States will receive a total of \$200 million in bonuses for doing just that. These grants will enable States to help even more parents go to work and succeed on the job. I urge States to use these resources to provide the necessary support—from child care to transportation to training—that can make a critical difference between welfare checks and paychecks.

We've also worked hard to help families leaving welfare meet the challenge of affordable

health care. In the bipartisan budget package I will soon sign, we will extend Medicaid coverage so that thousands of parents who leave welfare can keep the health coverage protecting them and their children. This budget also includes funding to help cover more uninsured children, speed coverage for patients with Lou Gehrig's disease, and increase payments to hospitals, teaching facilities, home health agencies, and nursing homes in order to ensure quality health care.

We have also secured an extra \$817 million to help working families afford child care, to meet their responsibilities both at work and at home. These and other child care resources will serve over 2.2 million children next year.

In this budget, we're also passing our historic new markets and community renewal initiative, the most significant effort ever to help hard-pressed communities lift themselves up through private investment and entrepreneurship. With the help of our new-markets tax credit, 40 strengthened empowerment zones, and 40 renewal communities, this initiative will spur billions and billions of dollars in private investment to communities that have not yet shared in our Nation's great economic revival.

From the streets of our central cities to the hills of Appalachia to the rugged vistas of our Native American reservations to the Mississippi Delta, we are giving people the tools of opportunity to make the most of their potential.

Finally, this budget also includes vital investments in our children and their education. With over \$900 million dedicated for the very first time to school renovation, thousands of local school districts finally will be able to give our children the classrooms they deserve.

We've increased funding by 25 percent to stay on track to hire 100,000 highly qualified new teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. We have nearly doubled funding for after-school programs to help more than 1.3 million students, while increasing support for teacher training and for turning around failing schools. And to open the doors of college even wider so that more of our young people can walk through them, we've increased the maximum Pell grant to an

all-time high of \$3,750. That's up nearly \$1,500 since 1993.

If we continue to invest in our people and create opportunities for them, if we continue to honor and reward work, our possibilities are truly without limit. By reaching out and working together, our best days still lie ahead. This budget proves it. The work of the American people prove it. The successful desire of people to move from welfare to work proves it.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:49 a.m. on December 15 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 15 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Charles F.C. Ruff December 16, 2000

Sue, Christy, Carin, Maggie, other family and friends. I was sitting in this service listening to Chuck's family members, friends, partner speak about him, and I was thinking he'd be fairly embarrassed by all these attempts to canonize him. So they put one client on the program. [*Laughter*]

I have been on the receiving end of all this wisdom you have been celebrating, and he always told me what he thought, especially when I did not want to hear it.

Chuck Ruff became the White House Counsel at an unusual point in history, when the White House was in the hands of the Democratic Party and the Congress was in the hands of a particular wing of the Republican Party, and a lot of the work of the White House Counsel was generated by the attempts of Congress to turn every political difference into a legal issue.

And Chuck had to be calm in the face of all of it: Attempts to prove that our policy on climate change, for example, was actually a secret socialist plot to destroy the free enterprise system; serious questions from a person who believed that a good form of criminal investigation was shooting bullets into a watermelon in his backyard. And Chuck never lost his cool, never lost his temper, and never let me entirely lose my sense of humor about what often was a patently absurd situation.

And then there were the serious issues beneath all the rancor and back-and-forth. And every single day—every single day—I was so profoundly grateful that my Counsel was so strong and wise and good and that he believed

so profoundly in our Constitution and rule of law.

As others have said, he never sought the spotlight, but when the moment came, he certainly shined. Millions of Americans saw him at work, mind and spirit. He cared about justice. He taught it; he shared it; and he lived it. His whole life was about doing good and doing right.

Others have commented on his propensity for doing two things at once. I liked that. He once said that he finally understood that he had been picked as the White House Counsel because he was the only person who was not distracted by my doing crossword puzzles when we reviewed our latest strategy in dealing with the congressional requests.

He was famous in the West Wing for watching football and listening to opera at the same time. But really, that captures the best of who he was, a competitor with passion, equal parts grace and guts, someone determined to make the most of every moment.

For those of us who knew and loved him, Chuck Ruff may have been in a wheelchair, but he had more moves than Magic Johnson or Michael Jordan, and when he heated up, he could hit any ball further than Tiger Woods, because he was so intensely committed to doing right and doing good.

I also would like to say a special word of appreciation, in front of his family and friends, for the fact that, in spite of all of the high-profile things Chuck did as the White House Counsel, one of the things that I most appreciated was that he was always there for the people in the White House, especially for the